

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for coagulating tissue, comprising:

an electrode adapted to produce a high-frequency current₁[[,]]

a gas-delivering device having an outlet and being adapted to deliver an inert gas from said outlet into a space defined between said electrode and said tissue, such that a plasma is produced between said electrode and said tissue when said high-frequency ~~high-frequency~~ current is applied to said inert gas, wherein a distal end of said electrode projects out of said gas-delivering device₂[[,]] and

a guiding device comprised of an electrically insulating material and disposed at said distal end of said electrode, said guiding device for directing and guiding ~~at least one of said gas and said plasma~~ such that at least a part of said ~~gas and~~ plasma is diverted in a predetermined direction,

wherein said guiding device is configured such that said plasma flows into said space substantially radially with respect to said outlet of said gas-delivering device, and

wherein the electrode is configured such that it may be retracted and pushed forward with respect to the gas-delivering device.

Claim 2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device is comprised of a thermally stable material.

Claims 4-5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device has a concave configuration on a side thereof that faces said outlet.

7. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device has a contour which prevents mechanical damage if said guiding device touches said tissue.

8. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said electrode is movable relative to said outlet such that when said electrode is moved into a retracted position said guiding device closes said outlet in a substantially leakproof manner.

9. (Currently amended) An apparatus for argon-plasma coagulating tissue, comprising:

a gas-delivering device;

an electrode disposed substantially coaxially with the gas-delivering device and configured to generate a high-frequency current, wherein a distal end of the electrode projects outward through an outlet of the gas-delivering device; and

a guiding device disposed at the distal end of the electrode, wherein the guiding device is configured for guiding ~~an inert gas~~ a plasma stream flowing through the gas-delivering device, the plasma stream being produced when said high-frequency current is applied to an inert gas delivered by the gas-delivering device.

wherein the guiding device is comprised of a material that is electrically insulating and thermally stable,

wherein the guiding device is disposed in an axially symmetric manner around the distal end of the electrode and configured such that the plasma stream is guided into a surrounding space substantially radially with respect to the outlet of the gas delivering device, and

wherein the electrode is configured such that it may be retracted and pushed forward with respect to the gas-delivering device.

Claims 10-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is shaped such that damage to the tissue is prevented if the guiding device touches the tissue.

13. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is spherical.

14. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device comprises a concave surface at a surface facing the outlet of the gas-delivering device and a flattened surface at a surface facing away from the outlet of the gas-delivering device and wherein a transitional region between the concave surface and the flattened surface has a rounded contour.

15. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device comprises a concave surface at a surface facing the outlet of the gas-delivering device and a substantially hemispherical surface at a surface facing away from the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claim 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein when the electrode is in a fully retracted state, the guiding device is seated on the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claim 18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is comprised of a ceramic.

20. (Previously presented) An argon plasma coagulating probe assembly comprising:
a tube;

an electrode disposed substantially coaxially with the tube and configured to generate a high-frequency current, wherein a distal end of the electrode projects outward through an outlet of the tube; and

a guiding device disposed at the distal end of the electrode, wherein the guiding device is configured for guiding an inert gas stream flowing through the tube,

wherein the guiding device is comprised of an electrically insulating and thermally stable material and is configured to have a concave configuration on a side thereof that faces the outlet and is further configured to prevent mechanical damage if the guiding device touches the tissue, and

wherein said electrode is movable relative to said outlet such that when said electrode is moved into a retracted position said guiding device closes said outlet in a substantially leakproof manner.

21. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said guiding device has a rounded contour.